



# Chambers's Journal

## SIXTH SERIES.

### THE MOORISH TREASURE.

By Captain CECIL NORTH.

#### CHAPTER I.

**P**AST Ushant, and across that much-maligned bay, 'The Bay o' Biscuits' of Tommy Atkins; past Finis-terre and the Berlins Islands, sunny little chips off the Portuguese coast; past St Vincent and Trafalgar, the capes of glorious memories; and then, where the great Atlantic rollers, their long eastward journey over, fling themselves, impetuous woers, on the gently-heaving bosom of the Mediterranean Sea, to lose their might and die in the soft smother of her blue caress—at this trysting-place of two seas, the great Rock of Gibraltar salutes you with its signal-gun.

Ever awake and watching, yet peaceful with the calm of conscious strength, the great fortress rests on the waters like some fabled monster of the deep taking a sun-bath, his head thrust far out into the lapping waves, his tail gently tickling the shores of the Straits he guards so well. Seaward, its frowning cliffs rise perpendicularly hundreds of feet above the tireless water, whose constant action, gentle though it be, has in the course of ages honeycombed the rock with many caverns where wind and water meet, filling them with a treacherous, swirling flood, a criss-cross of many currents not rashly to be adventured. Yet there are days in the hot summer season, when the ocean pulse beats like that of a dying man, that a boat manned with cool heads and strong arms may push a little, a very little, way into these dark places, and gaze on the jagged rocks that thrust up through the water on every side; but these days are seldom, and even when they do occur there is little to tempt men to the risk. Weird places, of a truth, are some of the water-caves, winding far into the bowels of the rock—how far no man can say, only the little rock-pigeons that live and nest in their cracks and crannies can tell.

High above these great holes of Nature's making,  
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the rock is scarred almost to its summit with others made by man. Neatly cut are they, and far more deadly in their own way than the watery ones below them, for in each sleeps a grim and monstrous gun, and the stack of shot and shell behind waits but a word to be hurled screaming and hissing into space or Spain, according to the exigencies of the occasion.

A strong place indeed is Gibraltar, known throughout both services as 'Gib,' and one of the best-tempered links in the steel chain with which the Great Queen strings her many jewels together. But, apart from this important duty, there are other good reasons for its being; for to 'Gib' come our suckling warriors to learn how to keep awake on guard, and how to make the best of the doubtful pleasures of 'bully beef' dinners, washed down with distilled sea-water. Here, also, the hot summer sun and busy mosquito, not to mention the scarcity of the genial cook or nursemaid, give him a foretaste of what he may expect when the great troop-ship swallows him, to disgorge him again to serve at Aden or Omdurman and other unholy places of the same kidney.

Gibraltar also provides a pleasant and lucrative post for some gallant old General nearing his end—and perhaps Westminster Abbey: 'His Excellency the Governor.' His duties are not very onerous; he has a General of lower rank to look after the troops, and beyond these there is little to govern. Hence he has leisure for other things, one of the chief of which is to attend to the due and fitting entertainment of the numerous distinguished travellers who in the cool weather honour the Rock with the presence of their fine yachts and, generally speaking, portly persons. These birds of passage consume most of their entertainer's money as well as his time; and not a few Governors leave the Rock poorer men than when they took up the appointment. There is one task, how-

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ever, that every Governor imposes on himself with much satisfaction—to wit, to discover some unarmed spot in his command where by dint of much scheming he can prevail upon the authorities at home to allow him to make more holes, filled with bigger guns than anything accomplished by his predecessors. This successfully carried out, and the battery duly christened with his own honoured name, he feels that he has done his duty; and when he sails away home into that obscurity which often overwhelms old soldiers when no longer on the active list—this is one of their greatest trials—he feels that the memory of his reign will be perpetuated, with the help of the battery, in at least one corner of the earth as long perhaps as the old Rock itself stands.

Such is Gibraltar. It had another name once, and other masters; but the lion lairs there now, and means to stay, yelp the jackals ever so loudly.

An old and weather-stained man, a Moor, lay on the edge of the rough track that, at the time of this story, did duty as a road through the many miles of cork-woods that stretched between the Spanish town of San Roque and the conglomeration of wretched shanties and ill-built barracks forming the lines that cut Gibraltar off from the mainland, called Linea. The man was motionless, his old brown burnous wrapped tightly round his skinny frame; and an inquisitive hoopoe, hopping about in the branches near by, ventured quite close in its curiosity to see what made this biped lie so still, so remarkably still.

Captain Tom Wooly, of the Royal Shropshire Rifles, known by his friends, and everybody else for that matter, as 'The Sheep,' employed as aide-de-camp to His Excellency the Governor of Gibraltar, came lolloping along the path with loose seat and slack rein, and nearly came a cropper as his pony shied violently at the bare feet and brown legs that so suddenly obtruded themselves on its sight. Barelegged individuals lying about busily engaged in doing nothing are no novel sight in sunny, lazy Spain, the land of *mañana* (to-morrow). But there was something in this man's attitude and appearance—or was it some instinct of the soldier, perhaps?—that prompted the aide-de-camp, after he had recovered his seat, to rein in his pony and take a closer look at the man than otherwise he would have done.

Ancient and dirty Moors are not inviting objects to examine; but it did not take the A.D.C. long to find out what was amiss with this one. The old fellow was dead, or next door to it. Thank God, the British fighting-man, be he officer or private, does not take long when an emergency arises to make up his mind what to do and how to do it! That is his birthright, and one

of the secrets of his success. Consequently Wooly was off his pony without an instant's hesitation, and promptly at work—unpleasant though the task was—attempting to revive the lamp of life so nearly burnt out in the disreputable bundle of old rags beside him. Presently his efforts were successful; with many a gasp and grunt the patient opened his eyes at last, fixing them in amazement on his rescuer, and spoke in feeble accents in Spanish, which soft and melodious tongue was familiar to the A.D.C. He had studied it long before coming to Gibraltar; and it was owing to this accomplishment he had obtained his present post.

'Ah, señor, you are kind! Another taste of the blessed spirit, I pray you. A thousand thanks, señor! I live again, though but for a brief space, I fear; too brief, alas! for the fulfilment of my purpose. Ah me! I must leave my task undone. What task, and who am I? you ask. Señor, I would gladly tell you did it rest with me alone; but, as it is, my lips are sealed. It must suffice you that I am the last of his race, the last of a once great—ay, noble—family; the last taker of a great oath, the last holder of a mighty secret. More brandy, señor. Ah! you are a good man, though I love not your race. Tell me, I pray you, what is your Excellency?'

'Me? Oh, I am an officer in the service of the Queen of England,' answered Wooly, falling quite unconsciously into the old man's rather inflated manner of speech; 'one who rides swiftly with the messages of His Excellency the noble Governor of the big Rock yonder beyond the Spanish lines; a man with heavy duties and responsibilities' ('Winding the clocks and checking the cellar-book chiefly,' he added to himself), 'and one whose time is precious. But I will help you on your way if it lies with mine, as it doubtless does. We must not tarry long. Already the sun is sinking to the hills behind Algeciras; and when the sun goes so does the evening gun, and then, as perhaps you know, all must be within the fortress gates or stay the night outside.'

'No, señor, my strength is spent,' said the old man. 'It may not be, though my way did indeed lie with yours, even to your very door, for my desire was to seek speech with His Excellency, whose man of confidence you are. To this end have I journeyed many weary leagues in hunger and affliction, in order that I might fulfil the obligations laid upon me by my oath; but I have failed, even as the others of my race have failed. The Fates fight against us ever; and now my last long sleep overtakes me, even before I reach my goal. Stay with me to the end, señor, I beseech you; I shall not keep you long. Feel round my neck, señor,' he continued in fast-failing accents; 'you will find a string, and tied to it a little bag of skin. In that is a single coin; its value is immense to me, but to you none

beyond that of which it is composed. Its secret must die with me, and while I live it must remain in my breast; but when I am dead take it, I beg you, señor, and keep it in remembrance of the stranger you tried to save, and who blesses you with his last breath.'

'Courage, my friend, courage,' cried Wooly. 'You are not going to die just yet if I can help it. I will ride on and get help, and have you carried in to Linea. Once there, you will recover your strength with food and rest, and I shall introduce you yet into the presence of the man you seek—my chief.'

He spoke to heedless ears, for, muttering some words in a tongue unknown to his listener, the old Moor shivered slightly, gave a choking gasp or two, turned over on his side, and lay still; and this time there was no mistake. Even the hoopoe was satisfied, and flitted quietly away.

The A.D.C. rose from his knees with a troubled look, not on account of the presence of death—that, I am afraid, made little difference to him; he was too familiar with it in its dusky form to be concerned about that. He had once been A.D.C. to a great General in a great war—at least the General said it was great, and he ought to have known—and he had seen piles of slain black men, although he had not actually been at the killing. But this had not been his fault. He had been the junior of a large staff, and as such his duties had been in the camp, seeing to the proper icing of his victorious General's champagne, rather than on the field of battle itself. Still, he used to ride out the following day and draw pictures for the papers at home, which was the next best thing to the killing, if you couldn't be at that; and he captured as many orders and medals as the best of them. What more does a man want?

No. Wooly was only concerned at the lateness of the hour. He was in doubt as to the course he should follow. Had he time, he asked himself, to ride round by the *venta* (inn), send somebody from there for the body, and yet reach the Rock before gunfire; or should he just cut across country and make sure of saving the gate, and let the next comer, who would probably be a Spaniard, be burdened with the thing that lay there? He hastily consulted his watch, made a mental calculation of times and miles, and decided, as his better nature prompted, for the *venta* and possible loss of dinner and bed at 'Gib.'

As he stooped to pull the hood of the bur-nous over the poor pinched face, the string round the man's neck caught his eye. Remembering the old gentleman's last words, though he attached little importance to them, he cut it, and was about to place bag and all in his pocket when he remembered that probably things of that description that had hung for ages round the necks of Moors were not likely to much resemble scent-sachets. The bag was easily opened, however, and that

which it contained, a disc of yellow metal—gold, Wooly supposed—about the size of a half-crown, covered with queer marks that he had then no time to examine, hastily dropped into his waistcoat pocket. As it fell it clinked loudly against what Wooly remembered to be a bad dollar that he had taken that very morning in his change after making a purchase from a 'scorpion,' as the mongrel natives of 'Gib' are called. He had put it separately in a pocket apart from his other money, intending to nail it on his door with others of the same breed when he got home. Bad money is plentiful at Gibraltar; the happy-go-lucky English officer is such an easy victim. As Wooly heard the sound an idea struck him. He knew something of Spanish ways, and saw the likelihood of a little fun at their expense; so he popped his dollar into the bag, retied the string where he had cut it, then mounted and quickly rode off at a canter, with something very like a grin overspreading his sunburnt features.

He had got but a little way, however, when a turn in the path brought him in sight of a couple of *guardas* leisurely riding towards him. These were exactly the men he wanted, so he galloped up and quickly told his story. In a few minutes more all three horsemen reached the spot where the body lay.

The gendarmes, or *Guarda Civile*, as they are called in Spain, are the pick of the soldiers of that nation. A detachment of them used, at the time of this story, to be quartered in Linea, and they patrolled the cork-woods in pairs, spick and span in their handsome uniform, with the idea of protecting travellers from the often too pressing attentions of the charcoal-burners who inhabited those regions. These latter gentry were in reality nothing but smugglers and brigands, extorting blackmail under the guise of alms whenever they thought that they could do it in safety. There were good reasons for suspecting that the *guardas* rather sympathised with these rascals, and had conveniently deaf ears and blind eyes when the victim of the robbery was a member of the unloved garrison of the Rock. Be that as it may, it in no wise affected their politeness and courtesy after their invariably too late arrival; and, as usual, Wooly found them grave, dignified, and slightly patronising.

'And had he nothing with him, señor; no bundle or anything of that kind?' asked one of the men as they both lit their cigars—after offering each in turn their cases to Wooly—and gazed pensively at the body at their feet.

'Nothing but that little bag you see, tied round his neck with string,' answered Wooly, who expected the question; adding, as if he had suddenly remembered it, 'and, by Jove! now I think of it, he said that it contained something of immense value. Let us examine it;' and the A.D.C. made as if he were about to act on his words.

The *guardas*, their former listlessness vanished, interposed hastily, with eager motions and sparkling eyes.

'Stop, señor! stop! I order you,' almost fiercely cried the man who had previously spoken. 'We must open nothing, touch nothing. This bag must be opened by the Alcalde at San Roqué alone. It will be his duty to see that its contents, whatever they are, go to the proper people: the man's family if they can be found, failing which to the State. We must take everything as it is, intact, and at once too'—and suddenly changing his tone to one of suspicious suavity—'and as doubtless your Excellency's time is of great value—for we know you to be a great functionary at Gibraltar—we will manage to dispense with your Excellency's attendance at San Roqué, for we would not dream of giving you more trouble than you have already had over this wretched carrion, and we beg your Excellency to dismiss the little matter from your honourable mind.'

'I am very much obliged to you indeed, my friends,' answered Wooly, 'and, unless you send me a summons to appear, shall, as you suggest, forget this business entirely. Now I must be off, so *adios, señores, adios*—or, as we say in English, good-bye, you two infernal scoundrels, good-bye;' so, returning the men's punctilious salute with one of equal gravity, though he could hardly help laughing as they smiled affably in response to his, as they thought, English good wishes, he once more sprang into the saddle and cantered off.

He had not gone many yards, however, ere he heard a fierce altercation going on behind him, and, glancing back, saw the precious pair already quarrelling over the possession of the bag and its supposed valuable contents. Thus did his little joke promise to bear early fruit; and Wooly wondered, as he made his way home, if the *guardians* of the peace all over the world were the guardians of the pieces as well.

## THE EMPLOYMENTS OF WOMEN.

By ISABELLA FYVIE MAYO.

IN TWO PARTS.—PART I.



SOMETIMES one is almost tempted to imagine that the 'employment of women' is a matter concerning only the last two or three decades. Yet women have done their full half of the world's work since the world began. Old adages tell us that 'a woman's work is never done.' If a modern poet has sung that 'men must work and women must weep,' was he not singing of 'three fishers,' men of a class in whose toil their womenkind have always borne a specially full share?

Therefore, gratulations over the 'increased' employment of women do not really signify that women do more work than before, but only that they are doing different work, and doing it in a different way. These new phases may, indeed, be less due to the presumed 'progress' of the sex than to the force of certain social changes which may be in themselves either evolutionary or devolutionary.

Consideration of this matter may be allowed to start from two simple premises: first, that woman has as much right to live as man; and second, that neither sex has any right to dictate how the other is to earn bread.

Yet, let us remember that there is always a chill in the regard cast on men who deliberately choose labours which women can do equally well. Few seem to suspect that a corresponding shade of contempt might with equal justice attach to women who ardently resolve to do what men can

do equally well. To deny this is at once to put the sexes on a different footing.

Practical observation leads one to believe that each man or woman, individually, should be left absolutely free to earn bread by that which comes as the 'next thing,' or for which any special idiosyncrasy or circumstance fits him or her; and this without any consideration of sex. Yet the same practical observation leads to the conviction that the direction of men and women in masses should be towards those forms of labour which most tend to the healthy development of the bodily and mental functions and attributes natural and attractive in either.

Has not the wife of a disabled skipper risen to the occasion and brought her husband's vessel safely into port? Has not an elderly man been known to go out contentedly charing when no old woman was to be found to do the duty? Both experiments were successful, individually; yet we think few would wish them to be made a basis for wholesale reversal of accustomed traditions. Possibly the same may be said concerning other divergences from old methods which at first may not strike one as in such glaring contrast.

The greatest change that has taken place in women's work is to be found in the number now employed as clerks of every conceivable kind. There is nothing so innately glorious in a clerk's career as to indicate this as a forward step for women. Many women always did clerical work



in the shops and warehouses of fathers, brothers, or other relatives or friends. Social and economic changes leading either to the extinction or to the enormous enlargement of such establishments have entirely altered conditions under which households did their business among themselves. What a few women formerly undertook as part of natural duty, thousands now do as wage-earners. Indeed, a perilous glamour having been thrown around the 'independence' and 'opportunities' supposed to attach to this new state of things, the clerk-market is now deluged with women, and men are being undersold and driven out. This may not end badly for the men; but it is hard to understand how there can be promotion for girls in a change from any other duties to mere quill-driving for a wage.

The biggest markets for such labour, whether in the different branches of the Civil Service or in houses of business, are found in capital cities, where, however, the money earned thereby will seldom do more than barely pay for the cost of living. Indeed, one wishes one could discover what proportion of such women's work is not, in one way or another, 'assisted labour.' One novel makeshift has already appeared in the form of various 'combined homes,' and similar expedients, in which congeries of people of one sex and of about one age, under little restraint and drawn together by no natural affinity, undergo anew many of the evils of monastic institutions without some of their greatest advantages!

The authorities who give information as to openings for this kind of work, its payment and prospects, generally indicate large cities as its proper field, and seem apt to state as its minimum wage what is practically its maximum, and, as its maximum, what is the wholly exceptional. In one instance it has been expressly stated that the salaries in Scotland are less 'because the standard of living is lower in that country'—another instance of the misuse of a phrase which thus deludes the foully-housed but highly-rented consumers of city milk, tinned foods, and alcoholic liquors into imagining that they are an order of beings superior to those who live under better social conditions, or to dwellers in lands which lie nearer to the sun!

The rush of educated or partially educated women towards clerical work of all sorts is explained because its requirements, or most of them, are believed to come within the scope of an ordinary school education, while such technical aptitudes as may be necessary may often be got by 'giving time' till experience is gained. Yet in no kind of work can the culture which comes of wide reading and the intelligence born of trained observation and memory be more advantageous. The 'ordinary copyist,' whether she toiled yesterday with her pen or toils with a typewriter to-day, is in a sense a misnomer. Authors who need such help do not give out

manuscript in fair round hand and well-arranged pages. Illegibility, contractions, and confusion of all sorts, nouns frequently of foreign origin, and strange scientific phrases—all have, in turn, to be divined. Skill in paragraphing and punctuation always has full value. Women who are not equal to these things must never expect the best class of clerical or secretarial work.

The professions of medicine, of art, music, and literature all now stand wide open to women. Yet, if these are to be pursued with any success, they demand not only special gifts, but also costly training and prolonged apprenticeship. They offer no inducements to women who desire or need to earn money speedily. Yet music and art often tempt young women into a busy idleness of 'attending classes' or 'practisings' which serve to veil their triviality or indolence from hopeful relatives doomed to disappointment when the time comes for practical results. As for the so-called 'lady journalism,' any journalism which bears the sex-line across it—the record of fashions, society functions, &c.—hardly ranks as an intellectual pursuit.

Medicine as a woman's profession still provokes certain questions, though everybody feels that these must be left to work themselves out freely, and that any arbitrary closing of the medical ranks against female aspirants is in future intolerable and impossible. Yet this new departure probably stands far more securely on this basis of the common freedom of a common humanity than on any of the special pretexts which were once urged in its favour. The idea that feminine delicacy was to be protected by the advent of the female practitioner had too much regard to false delicacy. It may be also asked, Can a robust medical experience be developed from the treatment of only half of humankind; and ought not the opposite sexes in every relation of life to have a bracing and inspiring influence on each other? If this be denied, and men doctors are adjudged to be so undesirable for female patients, why should female nurses be eligible for men patients, and such high ground be taken in their case that we hear that in military hospitals 'gentle birth in the nurses is a *sine qua non*'?—an invidious distinction which is not, to our knowledge, openly drawn around any masculine occupation.

Even 'medical women for India' have critics whose remarks deserve consideration. One woman-writer well known as an exponent of Indian life boldly asserts that nothing should be done tending to encourage Indian women to remain in close seclusion. She reminds us that the humbler Oriental women, notably those of the agricultural class, are practically as free as Europeans, and that every influence should be used to attract the opening of zenana doors. An Indian lady of English education pertinently inquires how far British women are to be

trusted in giving instructions in complicated or abstract matters of either body or soul after having hurried through a 'course' of study of the vernacular.

Sick-nursing is now a very popular calling. Superintendents of hospitals are inundated by applications. Romantic sentiment has gathered about this pursuit till, to the shallow and unreflective, it seems that it must be surely a much more admirable 'mission' to tend wounds and misery than to prevent them by wise ways of public thought or of household management. There seems to many young women a dash of adventure and attractive mystery about life in hospital wards. 'You are much mistaken,' said a great London surgeon to one whom he thought in danger of accepting this prevalent sentiment, 'if you imagine that the majority of nurses enter their profession from very high motives.' Desire for change and excitement undoubtedly directs the choice of many, who go forward much in the spirit of the young woman satirised as writing to her bosom friend that, 'now father is blind and mother is paralysed, it is so dull at home that I think I shall go away and become a nurse.' Of course, such girls seldom remain long in what is an exacting and wearing life; and nobody has more cause to resent these temporary waves of superficiality than have those women who are really born nurses, and whose value is obscured by the inrush of such as are but temporarily tolerated by a confiding public.

The care of the sick can scarcely reach its highest ideal save where personal attachment supplements knowledge and skill. Therefore, it belongs to the life of every woman. There are few households, indeed, where any girl can grow up without some opportunities for this experience. Such opportunities may well be supplemented by lectures, courses of reading, and well-planned demonstrations. If every woman could (as she should), under ordinary circumstances, undertake the care of the sick in her own home, this would but accentuate the value and raise the status of the 'born nurses,' who, never happy save in the special exercise of their gift, would then quite suffice for hospital cases and the grand occasions of major operations. The sight of the cap and veil of the hired trained nurse when imported into a household with women members scarcely raises one's idea of the family morale!

Surely, therefore, we may well look askance at efforts to introduce lady nurses for children in well-to-do homes, since such nurses are, according to the *Woman's Year-Book*, to 'take entire charge of the nursery, and to be prepared to do for the little ones all that a good mother would do, if she were not called upon to perform a host of other duties.' What 'duties' are duty, as coming between a mother and her children—those whom she has herself brought into the world? Would women fain emulate the cuckoo when it lays an egg and leaves it for another bird to hatch and rear? There is but one duty that can ever justify a mother in permanently delegating the care of her offspring, and that is when she must so leave them that she may earn bread for them to eat! Thoughtful people deprecate rash multiplication of crèches, as tending to encourage women to become wage-earners rather than home-keepers. But even that is surely less demoralising than a new employment expressly designed to leave affluent mothers free for 'a host of other duties'—that is, for morning calls, evening parties, theatre-going, bazaar-holding, sitting in committee, organising 'philanthropies,' even indulging in the 'devotion' of multiplied services or meetings; playing at work, while their real work—work which they have sought and obtained from Nature—is left to be done by paid proxy!

One odd condition which seems imposed on these 'mothers' substitutes' (for they are nothing else) deserves the reflection of any who would encourage girls into such a way of life. For the pain which is involved in it can scarcely be appreciated or even suspected by the girls themselves till it is too late. The condition is that they are to fulfil this function only till the children are eight years old! They are not expected to develop into the 'old family nurse,' such as the good dames who earned such unstinted affection from the great Russian poet Pushkin and from our own Robert Louis Stevenson. Such were not the mother's substitute so much as her instructor, ally, and stand-by. But in the new order these sacrificed vestals are not to reap where they have sown. With maternal affections developed and fostered by their duties, they are for ever to 'pass on.' Nurses who have had such experience have told us what it means. 'I can bear it no longer,' said one still in early middle life. Let girls take heed.



## OUR LADY OF DELIVERANCE.

By JOHN OXENHAM.

## CHAPTER XV.—CUTTING THE KNOTS.

**I**N spite of ourselves, and of the fact that all further plans concerning the Colonel might be rendered abortive at any moment by this wretched madman, we fell to discussing possibilities. It was evident that only three courses were open to us: either we must acknowledge ourselves beaten and set him free—which was not to be thought of for a moment; or we must hand him over to the law—which, indeed, we might have to do at any moment if Roussel was caught, but which would not benefit us in any way; or, supposing Roussel fortunately came to grief and ceased to trouble us, we could continue our present course of treatment—here or elsewhere. On these last words the whole matter—so far as the colonel was concerned and apart from the Roussel complication—seemed to hinge; and we found ourselves debating it as earnestly as though no Roussel existed.

Vaurel acknowledged that if a hue-and-cry were started on the Colonel's account we might be subject to a visit from the detectives at any moment; but nothing of the kind was at all likely for another week or ten days; and in that time it was to be hoped that the Colonel would come to a more reasonable frame of mind and open his mouth.

'I don't know,' I said. 'It seems to me he may go on this way till doomsday.'

'Ah! you began feeding him too soon, monsieur,' said Vaurel. 'If you had waited a day or two longer it would have shortened the time now.'

'It would probably have shortened his time, my friend; and I was not prepared to do that.'

'Well, unless we are prepared to lose the game, we have got to hold on to him. Monsieur does not suggest throwing down the cards?'

'Not a bit of it. I am keener than ever to learn all he can tell, and mademoiselle is hungering for news.'

'Then, monsieur, we must find another cage for the bird; for if once they put detectives on the matter they will soon work back here, and smell out things which that gay little captain would never dream of if he lived to be a hundred and ten.'

'Another cage? But that will not be easy to find. Where do you suggest?'

'I must think that out,' said Vaurel, and sat sucking away at his pipe as though the answer lay in the bowl of it. He sat for a long time in silence, and I saw by the slow curls from his pipe and the fixed look in his eyes that he was deep in the matter. I saw him glance across at me from under his brows once or twice as though in

doubt whether to mention what was in his mind; and then he said, 'Monsieur is rich? Is it not so?'

'Yes,' I nodded.

'And monsieur is a sailor?'

'Yes.'

'Then take him to the sea and keep him there till he speaks.'

'To the sea? How?' said I, surprised at the magnitude of the idea.

'By the river—in a boat.'

I sat looking at him through the smoke, and the possibilities of it all began to grow upon me.

'Do you know, I think that's a great idea of yours, Vaurel; and I sat far into the night and smoked many pipes upon it; and it grew and grew, with ever-widening bounds, till the end of it all was far beyond my ken. It was all vague and shadowy; but somewhere in it, like a golden glory, was a vision of mademoiselle—how I did not quite know; but she was there, and her brother was there too, and we sailed over summer seas, and the days were not long enough for our enjoyment of them.'

Vaurel sat patiently watching me through the smoke till he perceived that I saw my way.

'Will it do, monsieur?'

'It will do grandly. How will you get him to the sea? Have you a boat? The punt would not do.'

'I have thought of that. There is a boat belonging to the Château, in which mademoiselle and Monsieur Gaston used to play when they were children. It is here in the cellar, but it has not been used for no one knows how long. It will want repairing. We might get it up in the morning. It's a heavy tub of a thing; but if we can make it tight it is as safe as a house.'

'We will see to it first thing, and then I shall start at once for Southampton. I think I had better call at Combours on my way, Vaurel,' I said tentatively.

'Why, certainly, monsieur. Mademoiselle will be anxious for news.'

'It will take me at least a week to get hold of just the kind of boat I want, and we had better allow a margin of three days to bring her round to the mouth of the river. How long will it take you to bring him down, and how will you manage it? You can't do it all single-handed.'

'I'll manage it right enough if the madman's disposed of. I'll tie him hand and foot, and gag him, and cart him down to the boat in a barrow. Then I'll cover him over with sacks, and down we go. It will take me less than half

a day to get to the sea. Everybody knows me, and nobody will ask any questions.'

'You can't tie him and gag him single-handed.'

'I and Boulot and a revolver will manage that all right, monsieur; have no fears. If I need help I'll get Louis Vard. He's safe'—

He suddenly laid his hand on my arm and said in a whisper, 'Listen!'

We listened in blank, staring silence, and far away in the darkness outside, faint and dim through the closed windows, there came a long-drawn wailing cry.

'I thought I heard it before,' whispered Vaurel; and he got up softly and opened the windows as noiselessly as though any undue sound might reach the ears of the distant wailer. 'It's he!'

The woods looked dark and eerie as we stood there looking out over them, straining our ears to catch that most uncanny cry again.

'Are you sure?' I whispered.

'Nothing else could make a sound like that.'

'Wild cats?' I suggested.

'We have none.'

Thin and distant the mournful cry came again out of the darkness, from the direction of the old mill of Bessancy. Vaurel shifted uneasily on his feet in a momentary indecision, and then said, 'I'm going after him.'

'It is quite useless, my friend. You might as well look for a needle in a haystack as look for him in those woods.'

'I'll have a try anyhow,' he said. 'I'll take the dog. Do you keep an ear on the Colonel, monsieur.'

He went quietly down the hall and unloosed Boulot.

'*Au revoir!*' whispered Vaurel as he passed me.

They went down the steps of the terrace and the darkness swallowed them up. For a time I could follow their course by Boulot's snuffles, and then the silence and the darkness dropped down upon me again.

I stood there leaning over the stone balustrade, straining after them, and heard no sound but the falling of the water over the weir. Then, after what seemed an interminable time, there came from the distant woods the sharp report of a gun and the barking of a dog; and all my anxieties increased, for Vaurel, I knew, had taken no firearms with him.

The light from the open window behind me cut a solid shaft out of the darkness. It streamed across the terrace and over the balustrades, and cast their shadows and mine far out over the lawn below.

As I leaned there motionless, peering out into the darkness, I became suddenly aware of the passage of something or somebody between the light and myself. There was a disturbance of the lights and shadows in front of me, and yet I had not moved a limb.

My first thought was of the Colonel. Could he have broken loose and come out through the window? I turned quietly, half-expecting to see him peering out; but, instead, I saw that the light was blocked by the wild figure of a man looking in. And such a figure!—hair all a-bristle, thin bony arms and legs all bare, the remnants of his night-shirt hanging round him in rags—Roussel. His hands rested on the sides of the open window, and he leaned forward on them looking into the room.

I tiptoed across the terrace, hoping to grip him before he turned; but he heard me, and turned and fled into the darkness along the terrace, leaving a rag of his garment in my hand. I sprang after him, but he went as swiftly and noiselessly as a shadow, and when I reached the corner there was nothing but the darkness and not a sound to break it. I dared not follow and leave the house, with its more valuable prisoner, entirely unguarded. I stood and listened, and then returned to my post on the terrace; and presently Boulot came snuffling out of the dark, and close behind him over the turf came his master.

'What was the shooting?' I asked.

'That thick-headed fool Juliot. He was lying in wait for the madman, and took me for him, or he says so, and blazed away at me. Fortunately, he was too frightened to aim straight. I punched that silly head of his, laced hat and all; but we saw nothing of the other.'

'He has been here.'

'Here! How is that?'

I told him, and of my attempt to catch the madman.

'I wish I could come within arm's-length of him,' he said. 'But he can't last long, and if he meets that other fool in the dark he'll probably get his *congé* quick, unless the other's as scared as he was when I ran into him.'

We closed the windows and drew the curtains, and turned again to the solace of our pipes and to spasmodic discussion of the situation.

If the boat could be found—and Vaurel asserted that he could take me to it blindfold, as it was he himself that laid it up after it had been last used by the children; and if it could be made usable—and of that he expressed very little doubt—then the idea of taking Colonel Lepard down to the sea, to a yacht which I would hire in Southampton, and of holding him there prisoner absolutely at our discretion, was the best scheme possible under the circumstances. Still, we could not get away from the fact that everything—all our schemes, Lepard's future, Gaston's future, mademoiselle's future—depended on this wretched madman; and, under the circumstances, the concoction of plans respecting any of these matters while Roussel was still at large was very like the fabrication of matches over a powder magazine.

'Hang it, Vaurel! isn't it possible to lay some



trap for him? We must get hold of him by some means or other,' I said.

'Best trap would be the muzzle of that fool Juliot's gun, monsieur; but I don't see how we're to get him in front of it.'

'We must save him from that, if possible, my friend. He is in a pitiable state, poor devil! but there's no reason why he should be shot like a dog.'

Vaurel grunted noncommittally. He had not quite recovered his equanimity from the events of the evening.

My thoughts wandered back to the gaunt figure of Roussel peering in at the window, and an idea came to me suddenly.

'See here, Vaurel; he is starving both inside and out. It was the light of the room that attracted him. Perhaps he hoped to find something to eat. Suppose we try that again? We'll put food on the table, and leave the window open and the lights up.'—

'He will not come back, monsieur.'

'He may; there's no saying. Anyhow, it's easy to try it. Then we shall hide, you and I, say behind those curtains, one on each side of the window. If he should come in we have him.'

'*Bien!* We can try; but I doubt if anything will come of it. To-night?' he asked.

'No good to-night, I should say. He's been scared off for to-night. But we'll try to-morrow night, and the next night, and the night after that. It's really no good my going; in fact, we can do nothing till this wretched Roussel is disposed of. If we can lay hands on him, we must think out some plan of getting him to Paris and putting him in hospital there.'

'I wish he was there now!' said Vaurel fervently. 'He ties our hands, and every day may be of consequence.'

In the morning, after our usual inspection of the prisoner, and the usual offer of release in exchange for information, which was met with the usual sullen scowl and tightening of the hollow black cheek, we descended to the cellars. Vaurel led me straight to the boat, which lay on its chocks, carefully covered with a tarpaulin, and with its wheeled carriage beside it. We examined it carefully, and finding its timbers sound enough, it seemed likely that a few days' soaking in the river would make it as tight as a drum. We loaded it up at once, and Vaurel unbolted the door at the end of the passage which led out on the level at the south end of the Château, and we trundled the boat across the lawns down to the river. She took in water slowly through the seams when we both got into her; so we filled her, tied her to the bank, and left her there awash to soak at her leisure. Then Vaurel went back to the cellar to sort out her gear, and I strolled on along the river-bank, thinking of mademoiselle, and wonder-

ing greatly if all my efforts on her behalf, and all my hopes on my own, were to end in failure because of the craziness of Roussel and the contumacy of Lepard.

We duly laid our trap that night. We spread the table in full view of the window. We left the window wide open and the lamps lit, and flattening ourselves against the wall behind the window-curtains, waited in silent patience for what seemed endless hours; but nothing came of it, somewhat to Vaurel's satisfaction, I think, for he had no faith in my plan. When he closed the windows and drew the curtains, he dropped into a chair with a sigh of relief at last, and said, 'That's worse than shot-drill. I always did hate standing still. It's the hardest work in the world.' Then he charged his pipe, poured himself out a glassful of red wine, and made himself comfortable.

We were both on the *qui vive* for Roussel's uncanny cry; but the evening passed quietly, and we were both tired enough to be glad to go off early to bed.

I woke with a start in the middle of the night, and found myself in a cold sweat of something very like terror, though I had no idea what had caused it; but in another moment I knew, for there it came again, startling all the echoes through the great empty house—the long-drawn, pitiful wail that we had heard the night before. It was the cry of a lost soul; and though I knew perfectly well that the lost soul was Roussel, cold chills crept up my spine, and I felt the hair at the back of my head begin to bristle.

I heard one terrified howl from Boulot, and then he was silent. I sprang out of bed and stumbled to the door. The madman was in the house somewhere, and we must find him. I felt my way to Vaurel's room, which was only a few steps down the passage, and my flesh chilled and prickled as I went, lest I should run into the terror in the dark.

'Vaurel!' I hissed.

There was no answer; but I heard the bed shake, and felt my way towards it.

He was under the bedclothes in utter panic. He had, I supposed, been awakened out of his sleep as I had, and had not yet got over the fright of it.

'Vaurel!' I said, and put my hand on the writhing heap of bedclothes.

He only moaned from under the clothes.

I pulled the things down from over his head, in spite of his efforts to keep hidden, and said, 'Come out, Vaurel! Don't be a fool! Roussel is in the house somewhere.'

'Is it you, monsieur?' he gasped. 'I thought it was the devil himself. Did you hear it?'

'Of course I heard it. It frightened me into a fit almost; but after all it's only Roussel, and we can tackle him. I wonder what the Colonel thinks of it.'

'He'll think his master's come for him,' said Vaurel, recovering. 'Have you got your revolver, monsieur?'

Suddenly Boulot, in the hall, broke out into a fury of howls and yelps and screams of fear and rage, till the whole house rang again. We ran out on the landing, and heard him flinging himself out the length of his cord till the door rattled like a loose shutter in a gale; and when the cord brought him to with a short turn, he choked and yelled and sprang out again and again, for he had seen or smelt the man, and no longer thought it was a ghost or the devil, as Vaurel said.

I must confess that I had no liking for going downstairs; but it was no good standing there in our shirts, so we cautiously began the descent, and derived a certain amount of courage from the jostling of our shoulders against one another.

Vaurel called to Boulot, and the dog gave a hoarse bark of joy at the sound of him. Vaurel loosed his collar, and he dashed away with a yelp of satisfaction in the direction of the door that led to the cellar. We opened the cellar door, and he hurled himself down; we heard him worrying around with short barks and yelps, and then away he went across the lawn.

'Thousand devils!' said Vaurel. 'I must have left that cellar door open.'

That was undoubtedly what had happened. Roussel, prowling round the house, had come upon the open door and strayed into the cellars. He had doubtless come up the cellar steps; and when Boulot caught sight or wind of him, and burst out into that tornado of howls, the madman had fled.

It was no good thinking of sleep for that night. We threw on some things, and lighted the lamp in the room where we had been sitting. Vaurel started a fire, for the air was chilly, and we sat before the hissing logs and smoked the rest of the night away. Boulot came back presently, and flopping contentedly down at our feet, intimated his intention of spending the night before the fire, and we could not find it in our hearts to disturb him.

Vaurel did not attempt to conceal the fright he had had. 'I awoke in a fright,' he said, 'and did not know what it was; and when I heard the next howl I was certain it was the devil come in person for the Colonel. It seemed to me he might make a mistake if he was wandering around loose like that; and when I felt your hand on me, monsieur, I was sure he had got me; though what good the bedclothes would have been against him I didn't stop to think. And you, monsieur—you had no fear?'

'Hadn't I? Why, my hair was standing on

end, and my legs felt stuck full of prickles; but I came to my senses sooner than you did.'

'Curse that gibbering idiot!' said Vaurel. 'I never had such a fright in my life—never! *Mon dieu!* I would like to know what the Colonel made of it all.'

To judge by the Colonel's face next morning when we visited him, he had had quite as bad a time as the rest of us. He was the colour of lead, and his eyes had a scared look in them; but the bristly black cheek was clenched as tight as ever, and he spoke never a word.

Vaurel ostentatiously bolted the outside cellar door while it was still daylight next day. He laughed at me when I suggested laying the trap again for Roussel, but finally consented; and we arranged the room as before, and took our stand behind the curtains on each side of the open window. Never a sound came, and we waited and waited—hours longer, it seemed to me, than on the previous night. Then, just as I was on the point of giving it up again as a bad job, my heart gave a leap into my throat, and the cold chill of the previous night began to creep out on me again; for, without the slightest sound, I saw through the slit between the curtain and the wall a gaunt, bristling head come sneaking in at the window. The wild eyes rolled round the room and seemed to start out of their sunken caverns at sight of the food and wine on the table. Something clucked in his throat, and he began to dribble at the mouth. He was evidently leaning forward with his hands on the sides of the window, as I had seen him that other night.

Cautiously, soundlessly, one thin, hairy leg came inside; then there was a crash outside, and the poor fool threw up his arms with a shrill, womanly scream, fell forward in a heap on the floor, and lay still; and as we sprang out from behind the curtains the window was suddenly filled with the blue-and-silver figure of the gendarme Juliot, and the smoke was still curling in the barrel of his rifle.

'*Voilà, messieurs!*' he said triumphantly. 'That, I think, puts an end to the ghost;' then to me, '*Tiens!* monsieur, I did not know you were here still.'

'He is finished,' said Vaurel. 'You had it all your own way this time, Monsieur Juliot.'

'The people up there,' said the gendarme, jerking his head in the direction of the village, 'are having fits about him. I had to take the matter in hand myself.'

We gave Juliot as much cognac as was good for him, and then in the dim dawn I persuaded the two men to carry the poor frail body up to the village; nor could I help feeling easier in my mind now that one of our stumbling-blocks was removed.

## TOMATO CULTURE IN SUSSEX.



N the well-known 'Trial Scene' in *Pickwick*, the amiable old gentleman is represented as ordering mutton-chops and tomato-sauce. Mutton-chops are a commonplace article of consumption; but an air of gentility is given to the repast by the sauce which was to be taken with it. When the novelist sent forth his work to the world he succeeded in giving a tone of refinement to the famous founder of the Pickwick Club by the skilful touch of making him ask for a sauce in which the distinguishing ingredient was a foreign, and consequently an expensive, product of the vegetable kingdom.

The native habitat of the tomato is South America, and it came to us by way of the United States. As the tomato-plant, when cultivated out of doors, requires sunshine and a high temperature, it was grown successfully in many parts of North America; and when specimens of its fruit were first sent to this country they were rather prized for their colour than enjoyed for their flavour. It took a considerable time to familiarise people with the foreign novelty, and they hesitated to partake of it either in its cooked or uncooked state. It was only after it began to be grown here, and trial was made of it in various quarters, that confidence was felt in it as a fruit which could be consumed with safety and satisfaction. When first known among us it bore both its native name tomato and the name of 'love-apple,' which the Americans seem to have given it. Of the two names, the first only survives.

The tomato-plant will grow out of doors in England and bear fruit; but to have any success it should be placed by a wall and have a southern or western exposure. As an outdoor annual it is decidedly tender; a cold, wet season or the slightest touch of frost is fatal. On its introduction into Italy it was found to be much more at home there than in the British Isles; the dry atmosphere and strong sunlight of Italy is so favourable that during the hot season its fruit is largely used by the peasantry with their meals, and, being a cheap and a refreshing food, it is a welcome addition to their somewhat scanty larder.

In our own country the tomato is essentially a hothouse plant. For its successful growth it should be abundantly watered; but there must also be a free circulation of dry, warm air, so that the leaves and blossoms will not become mildewed. Then two other conditions are necessary: it should have an ample amount of sunshine, and the soil must be of the richest quality. Like the rose-bush, it is a gross feeder; and if it is to succeed, fully one-fourth of the soil should be manure obtained from the stableyard, and this ought to be only partially rotted. The watering of the plant and the preparing of the soil in

which it grows can be managed in almost any part of the kingdom, and for economical heating all that is needed is a cheap supply of coal; but the necessity for an exceptional amount of sunshine seems practically to limit tomato cultivation to one particular district of the kingdom.

It has long been known that the strip of land in Sussex which lies between the range of chalk-hills called the South Downs and the English Channel, and extending from Lymington to a few miles east of Worthing, is a region where fig-trees grow in the open air and produce the green figs which supply our fruit-markets. Elsewhere this fruit has to be raised under glass, at a cost which prevents it from competing with figs produced in the open air. The presence of warmth and sunlight sufficient to mature a crop of figs pointed out this district as certainly the best for raising tomatoes, peaches, grapes, and other fruits which require heat and—what is even more important, and cannot be produced by artificial means—sunlight. It thus happens that any one who travels through this district by the coast route of the Brighton and South-coast Railway can see on both sides of the line great clusters of hot-houses, and at most of them a circular windmill in motion—a kind of windmill entirely unlike the old-fashioned one with its four huge arms. At the stations passed notice will also be taken of immense piles of baskets on the way to or from the London and provincial fruit-markets. The strong round baskets hold exactly twenty-eight pounds of tomatoes each. Some idea may be formed by the traveller of the extent of the business when he is told that four baskets hold a hundredweight of tomatoes, and eighty baskets a ton.

When an early crop of tomatoes is wanted a sowing is made in January, and other sowings may take place at intervals until the beginning of September. From the last sowing a supply of fruit is obtained during the winter months. Market-gardeners raise crops which will be ready for sale at seasons when they expect good prices will be obtained; they know that when crops like apples and oranges are first offered a decline in the price of tomatoes is certain. It is also found expedient, in gardens where tomatoes are the principal crop, to have other crops on which to rely to make up for losses and to occupy the staff of workmen throughout the year. Hothouses for grapes, peaches, and cucumbers, and for forcing strawberries and chrysanthemums, are built side by side with tomato-houses. A portion of the ground is also frequently set apart for mushrooms; and this crop is gathered from the sides of ridges which are from three to four feet high. As the mushroom, unlike the tomato, does not thrive in sunshine, the ridges are littered

with loose straw to protect them from the sun's rays and heavy falls of rain. In several gardens apple and pear trees are planted; but as the ground is in a high state of cultivation, only choice varieties are raised.

The writer spent some time last August at the Lyminster Nursery grounds, which are situated about half-way between Arundel and Littlehampton, and obtained from the manager such measurements and information as will convey some idea of the work done in one of the largest undertakings in Sussex.

In most of the older nurseries the supply of water is obtained by means of a pump worked by a windmill. This is, however, an unreliable source of power; and as it sometimes fails in warm weather when a supply of water is a necessity, the hothouses run the risk of having their crop destroyed by the stoppage of water-supply for even a single day. Therefore, at the Lyminster and several other nurseries the windmill has been discarded and an atmospheric engine used instead. This engine is of a half-horse power; there is no boiler with its safety-valve or other complicated parts to get out of order or cause an explosion. The engine is small, and all that it requires is to be well oiled and have its fire lighted, when in a very short time it is ready to start, and keeps on pumping as long as the fire is maintained. In four hours such an engine pumps about three thousand gallons of water into a tank supported on iron columns at a height of thirty feet. From this tank an iron pipe conveys water to the hothouses and all parts of the ground; an india-rubber tube fixed on the supply-pipe being used for watering the plants, which is thus done at remarkable speed and with great economy of labour. In former days to get a supply of water it was usual to dig a well at considerable expense. Now it is only necessary to drill a hole about fifty feet deep and put in an iron tube; into this a pipe an inch and a half in diameter is inserted, and through these the engine pumps a supply of water which has never failed even in the driest summers.

On visiting the Sussex nurseries it is found that the hothouses vary much in size, one owner preferring those of moderate dimensions, while another considers there is economy in the consumption of coal when they are built on a large scale. As each hothouse has its own heating apparatus, and as it is easy to ascertain the value of the tomato crop and the cost of coal employed in its production, it would seem to be a simple problem to determine what is the best size of house to build. But the question has practical difficulties; for, though it may be cheaper to raise a certain weight of fruit in a large house, the loss is greater should any accident occur to render the crop inferior in quality or lighter in weight.

In the Lyminster Nursery the two largest tomato-houses are two hundred and thirty-five and two hundred and sixty-five feet long respectively, and each of them is thirty-two feet wide. In the smaller house about three thousand plants are grown; in the larger about three thousand five hundred. When the crop in these and the other houses is ripe, the work of gathering, weighing, and packing is very heavy. As with all fruit crops, which are necessarily of a perishable nature, there can be no delay; each tomato and cucumber as soon as it is ripe must be picked and despatched so as to reach the consumer before it shows any appearance of shrivelling or decay. Should there be a superabundant supply in the market the excess falls into the hands of the costermongers, by whom they are sold from stalls or barrows in the poorer districts. Ripe fruit must be sold at once for what it will bring; and the grower has the utmost confidence that the salesman or agent will secure the best possible price for his consignments.

There is complete organisation in the business of market-gardening, and the transit from Sussex by railway is so rapid and reliable that very little fruit is allowed to become unfit for food. Of course, in the fruit-trade, as in all trades, prices are determined by supply and demand; but there are few commodities in which prices fluctuate so much and so rapidly as market-garden produce. In the case of mushrooms, for example, the price has been known to fall from tenpence per pound to twopence in one week, owing to a glut of the market.

In market-gardening it is found inadvisable to put all the eggs into one basket; in other words, it is not prudent to depend on tomatoes or on any other crop alone. Loss in one article of produce may be compensated by success in others, and extensive failure in one season's crop may be made good by success in subsequent seasons. It seems necessary also that cultivation should be carried on upon an extensive scale if profit is to be made; and to this end it is essential that the market-gardener should have ample capital. The small producer appears entirely out of place, as he cannot meet the casualties to which the business is liable; and unless he can send large supplies to the agents, they do not consider it worth opening an account with him. The supply of tomatoes in Covent Garden, and in the markets of Liverpool and the Midland cities, is furnished by professional gardeners whose business is conducted on an extensive scale. Tomato culture in particular does not seem a business which can ever be made a cottage or minor industry; it is carried on everywhere in the Sussex belt of country on so extensive a scale that unless the produce can be sent in hundredweights and tons it has small chance of finding its way into the markets.



## THE SALT COUNTRY.

By CHARLES EDWARDES.



IN accordance with ancient etiquette, when the town-crier goes through the streets of Northwich announcing a public sale, he ends his announcement with the words, 'God save the Queen and the lord of this manor.' This old custom has been revived quite recently. It is at least harmless if the bellman has plenty of time on his hands; it also excites pleasant fancies about the days when the residents in the Weaver valley were not aware of the vast salt-lagoons stretching for miles under the earth whose crust they inhabited so peacefully. But really, after even a brief visit to this haunted spot of Cheshire, one cannot help feeling that it would be just as well if the bell-ringing functionary were to add to the words of his pious appeal, 'And God save Northwich also, lest by-and-by it sink utterly into the caverns which now by man's handiwork stand yawning beneath it to devour it!'

Periodically one hears of this or that subsidence in Northwich or Winsford, chief centres of the salt industry in England, and thinks little about it. The residents in the neighbourhood itself seem so philosophic that the stranger may be forgiven if he also just shrugs his shoulders and merely exclaims, 'What a pity!' By most remarkable luck, no one seems to lose his life in these accidents. There are, to be sure, a number of stock authentic tales of narrow escapes. A brewer's man, with a wain full of beer-barrels, had left the cart, when of a sudden down it went, horses, beer-barrels, and all, and nothing remained but a hole with the earth still tumbling in upon the vanished load. A man was fishing for pike in a pool near Northwich, when he felt the banks sliding under him. He hurried upwards, and then before his eyes whole trees and thousands of tons of earth moved rapidly down into the pool and disappeared, leaving the pool itself much extended. A peasant brought a cow into the town to sell, and lo! a hungry rift broke in the very streetway under his nose, between him and his cow. And so forth. There are scores of less sensational recorded incidents; and the number of houses, churches, and manufactories that have been ruined by subsidence must now be well over a thousand. But the only man known to have been thus lost underneath seems to have been an unfortunate named Littler, who, while mining in the salt rock, had to run with others before the danger of a slide, but returned for his coat, and has never been seen since. Of this event there can be no doubt. One of the poor fellow's comrades told me the tale, pointing out the marly cliff above the mere as the exact upper site of his tomb.

Yet common-sense insists that the security of life in Northwich and Winsford cannot in the future thus be guaranteed by simple rule of three deduction. Year after year the vicious little chimneys of the various saltworks continue to smoke ardently, proving that the pumps are forcing up their millions and millions of gallons of the brine which may be said to be the district's foundation. The brine is, indeed, replaced by the fresh water which drains from the surface through the permeable upper crust; but this rain-water immediately begins to absorb the rock-salt itself—to every gallon two pounds ten ounces of the soluble rock—and thus the new brine in its turn ascends to the vats and the destructive process continues; and little by little, or much by much, the upper surface itself sinks down into the cavernous spaces below. The spacious lakes in the hollows about and even in the salt towns are picturesque enough; but they ripple with malignant suggestion. One knows that a particularly audacious diver might descend into them, pass from their funnel-shaped centre of depression into the bowels of the earth, and thence wander at will in the water-charged bowels of the earth. And by degrees this incalculable number of tons of water bites into fresh subterranean clearings, with fresh devastation above; the loose earth slides down into the water, and far and wide the local centre of gravitation is again disturbed.

At first sight these radiant, low-lying meres of the salt-country seem ideal lures for the skater in times of frost. But it will be surmised that they are nothing of the kind. Imagine the state of the surface ice when after a week's frost the water underneath falls six or seven feet in an hour. Edgar Poe himself could scarcely do justice in fancy to the sequel were a thousand or two skaters to break through and be drawn into the whirl of the funnel at the pool's lowest part. For the same reason these attractive meres are left alone by the swimmer. Their very banks in places are scrupulously avoided. Anything may happen to them at any time. This only is certain: it is their irresistible mission to enlarge and destroy in spite of the endless succession of loads of rubbish of all kinds from many parts of the world which are tilted into their omnivorous maw.

Both Northwich and Winsford are in a perilous state. Their situation on the Weaver River is curiously similar. The main street of each town descends at a sharp incline to the waterway, and climbs thence from a bridge which is constantly in need of readjustment. In Winsford just now one sees more indications of subsidence than in

Northwich, though a short time ago it was the latter town that yielded sensational paragraphs for the press. The Winsford main street drops at about half a right angle to the river, and the rise on the other side is even more considerable. In the lowest parts of the depression are very plain proofs that the tradesmen have been taught by experience to be ready for all emergencies. Shops that were once level with the road must now be entered down flights of steps. Other shops have yielded up their basement stories completely. They are supported on piles which descend immediately from the boards of the shops themselves. A jeweller, a pork-butcher, and a shoemaker do business on these discomfiting terms. The stranger would hesitate before entering the premises—that gaping cavity underneath has so very evil a look. But in Winsford they seem reconciled to the inevitable. They argue that the sinking of the piles can be the more easily watched and measured; nor does it occur to them that the risk of a sudden collapse, which may in their situation end in a rapid glide even into the brown water of the Weaver River, is worth long consideration. And yet this is just what has been happening for years with the land scarcely a stone's-throw away. The river hurries towards the town of black chimneys and ugly red tenements through a vast lake of the characteristic kind, and there is no knowing when all the lower parts of Winsford will disappear and help the lake's extension. The remainder of the town will then have to be connected by a high-level bridge, for which any one of the Thames bridges in London may serve as a model.

There are some rather handsome buildings in the low-lying parts of Winsford. The Verdin Jubilee Baths are especially notable, and the whole district will deplore their loss. There is also Parr's Bank close to the Weaver Bridge—so close, in fact, that, to echo a mild local jest, unless you are 'above Parr' in Winsford, you ought never, for your house's sake, to feel anything like safe from a sudden subsidence and its accompanying introduction to the mud of the Weaver. Nearly adjacent is an operatives' club-house, plain but sturdy, with the quaint and somewhat challenging inscription, 'Who'd have thought it? This building was built by working men for the working classes.' It is impossible not to wish that its subscribers had been more prudent in the choice of ground for their institution. Nothing could be more convenient if proximity to the seat of their labours were the most desirable feature of their club; immediately behind the houses on the opposite side of the street are the acres and acres of the saltwork, studded with short black chimneys and possessed by the salubrious steam of boiling brine. But the soil is slipping from its foundations, to show that it is quite impartial in its antipathies; and sooner or later its fate will be the same as that in store for its neighbour

buildings. It may not have so far to fall as the rows of slatternly tenements on the high land just south of the town, the back premises of which stand on wooden stilts above the ground that is slowly and inevitably sliding away from them; but they are all about equally insecure. The distorted appearance of these meaner houses must at times have a curious effect upon the muddled heads of their tenants. When the brain is slightly awry with a little more beer than is wise, the uneven floor, lolling doorways, and tipsy-looking edifices may well seem a taunt to the suffering reveller himself. The iron rosettes which decorate the houses are of course not merely ornamental excrescences; without them and the iron rods that run from them half the buildings would on little encouragement collapse like card castles before a puff of wind.

Middlewich, some three miles to the east of Winsford and six south of Northwich, does not as yet show such signs of subterranean emptiness as Winsford. A miserable little brook meanders through it in quest of the Weaver; chimneys of abundant saltworks rise within a stone's-throw of its main street; the people wear clogs as in Winsford; and on the sidings of its railway station are companies of trucks laden with 'butter' salt for export. A few old half-timbered houses of the downright Cheshire type are welcome objects in its streets; and, like the other 'salt' towns, it is profusely supplied with taverns for the workers in its thirst-inspiring factories. But it stands, upon the whole, sufficiently erect. The old church in the lowest part of it may never, one hopes, be in positive danger, although the tombstones in its churchyard have already assumed eccentric attitudes where they have not gone from the perpendicular plumb to the horizontal. Near it are certain clear traces of mischief: a house in ruins, others out of line and sunken, and others braced in the conventional way for buildings with weak backs. At a venture, one may surmise that insurance rates here are by no means so high as at Northwich and Winsford, and the trade of builder is not quite so replete with compensations. In these two towns lately they have taken to building houses in a clumsy amalgam of bricks and wood, whereby it is comparatively simple to give them a nudge upwards in case of need. The old style was to live in the subsiding edifice with complete and admirable trust in Providence, moving from floor to floor as it sank, until it became in course of time a building of something less than half a story. There is an inn in Winsford—the 'Ship'—which has thus gently gone under. Obviously in so bibulous a district a tavern's license has very distinct value. When 'Ship' the first sank to the bedrooms, 'Ship' the second was promptly raised over it, so that the local

privilege might not be lost. One may speculate as to the number of other 'Ships' that will sink and serve as props to their successors ere the general flood occupies the Weaver's valley and sends half the inhabitants of Winsford and Northwich flying, swimming, and floating for their lives.

The country between Middlewich and Northwich is apparently little affected by the mining and melting in the Weaver valley to the west. It is high land for Cheshire, with two pleasant villages, Bostock and Davenham, intervening. The time will come when from the Bostock ridge there will be a fascinating view of the long stretch of islanded water in the valley below. At present one finds enough here to interest in the model neatness of its villa-like cottages, in the multitude of presentation pumps and fountains and sign-posts, with seats which give an air of private opulence to its high-road, and in the famous old blasted trunk of an oak-tree in the heart of the village, bearing a notice that 'this tree stands in the centre of the county of Cheshire.' The air is strong and bracing, and doubtless the salt tang that it gets from the lowlands to the west adds to its salubrity. Indeed, in this condemnation of the saltworks of the 'wich' district for their surface havoc, one may still record with gladness that their operatives are not handicapped in the matter of health, like those of so many other of our island industries. Neither consumption, influenza, nor epidemics of a more virulent kind have much chance with these men who toil in the steam of the bubbling brine.

The pretty spire of Davenham's church, nearer Northwich, lies more in peril than the village of Bostock above. One may sincerely wish it the full measure of safety, for it will have a charming effect from the inland sea of the future. Thence to Northwich there is a gradual decline, until again at the Weaver Bridge, where the town is entered, the familiar tokens of instability recur. There is such a remarkable congestion

of traffic and pedestrians at this base of the agreeable little town, with its curious contrast of the brand-new and the very old, its mellow markets and uneven wynds, that one cannot help entertaining the fear that some day its fate will be like that of the herd of swine in the Bible. The muddy waters of the Weaver will be agitated as never before when that superb but calamitous tobogganing movement sets in.

The saltworks themselves, which are zealously and without cessation working all this ruin, are not as interesting as their destructive mission. One sees the brine emptying into the spacious shallow vats from the pipes which draw it a hundred or two hundred feet from below, where the rock-salt has its caverns. This brine boils, evaporates, and leaves the salt, which has then only to be collected and made marketable in various degrees of excellence. The market itself is, of course, immense; and just because we must have salt to our meat, and it is better to use home-produced stuff than imported material, the Salt Union and the other companies of the 'wich' district are toiling their utmost towards the transformation of the Weaver valley. Some believe that in less than a generation this will assume its new aspect, as a long lagoon studded with islets; others put the time off, and hint that it may be the middle of the next century ere the change sets in. That the county of Cheshire is bound to be much altered by-and-by in its surface no one can doubt. Considered broadly, perhaps the change will not be wholly deplorable when once the waters have finally settled themselves and the inhabitants of the future can build on the shores of the lagoon with fair assurance that they will not be submerged by inundations or slip into the waters without warning. England will be a trifle more picturesque, though the towns which have so long and audaciously presumed to 'sit above the salt' may have gone down for ever into the new Zuyder Zee.

## THE 'ULTIMA THULE' OF AFRICA.



At the present time, when the eyes of the civilised world are turned upon South Africa, and many are talking of settling there in the happy time when the war-clouds are dispersed, it may interest English readers to hear of a little-known though beautiful part of the Cape Colony. The journey north to Johannesburg has often been described; life on the Karoo and life on ostrich-farms are old stories; but few, I think, know anything of that stretch of country lying between the two southernmost points of Africa—Danger Point and Cape

Agulhas. Up to the present time the district was considered rather an out-of-the-way place, lying as it does quite off the great highways to the north and north-east, though within a hundred and fifty miles of Capetown. The railway only reached the foot of Sir Lowry's Pass, a distance occupying two and a half hours from Capetown, and the rest of the journey had to be done by post-cart. However, the railway now in course of construction over the pass to Caledon is expected to be finished at the end of this year, which will give the outlying portions of Caledon and Bredasdorp easy access to the capital.

This 'Ultima Thule' of Africa is the great health-resort of the colony. Wonderful and magnificent heaths cover the slopes of the lonely hills from August to December, absolutely bewildering in beauty, in vivid scarlet, sea-green, snow-white, orange, yellow, coral-pink, &c., in every imaginable variety of form and size. These give place, a few months later, to the everlasting flowers in yellow, white, red, and purple. The natives ('coloured people,' they call themselves) collect the white variety for export, principally to France and Germany; the coloured flowers are used locally for mattresses, each flower being pressed open between the hands. Though these mattresses have a faint smell of turpentine, they are not at all uncomfortable. All through the year, when one kind of flower disappears it is followed by another in endless succession, almost the loveliest being a sky-blue blossom exactly like a harebell magnified some twenty or thirty times.

Botanists, naturalists, and sportsmen would all find much to delight them here. Game abounds—partridge, pheasant, quail, snipe, plover, wild-duck, and four or five kinds of buck: you will find all on one farm. If the sportsman aspires to the greater excitement of the chase, there is almost always a jackal that has been worrying the sheep, or a 'tiger' (Cape leopard) that has tried to kill a young foal, and has perhaps succeeded; and to exterminate these wild animals is a religious duty.

Then the wild-bird life! I shall never forget riding into a *vlei* one hot summer afternoon, and startling a great flock of flamingoes from its calm waters. They flung themselves straight up into the air, right overhead, in great flashes of white, crimson, and black, and then flew off in a slow and dignified manner towards the sea. Let us follow them down to the shore, the very 'Ultima Thule' of Africa. We ride over low heath-covered hills, every here and there a patch of pure white sand dazzling the eye. Now we hear the thunder of 'the great Agulhas' roll;' but as yet we cannot see the heavy breakers. Let us get to the top of the hill. Here now lies at our feet the long stretch of that cruel shore on which many a good ship has come to a sad end. That white line of foam out at sea marks where the *Celt* was wrecked; those black spots on the sand are beams of wood, fragments of masts, life-buoys, relics of the days ere the lighthouses on Danger Point and Cape Agulhas were built.

Let your horse pick his own way down; he knows the country much better than you do, and is quick of eye and very sure-footed. As there are no hard roads, the horses here are not shod. Now we are on the sands, long, straight, level—stretching away for miles along the water's edge, where a strong salt wind sweeps in from the Indian Ocean. How we enjoy it! How the horses enjoy it too! The dogs are mad with

delight, and are chasing the sea-birds as we gallop along. There they go—the curlews, herons, gulls—all screaming an indignant protest against our intrusion in the world they have held undisturbed for unknown ages, into which we 'Uitlanders' are thoughtlessly rushing. The penguins don't care; they are sitting on rocks far out in the water, very solemnly, all in a row, with nice white waistcoats and neat ties.

Homeward now, round by the great salt-pan. The salt harvest is over, and the salt stored away in that little hut for use later on. This salt is white, rather coarse-grained, and has a pleasant though strong flavour; and after using it for some time ordinary table salt is quite insipid. In winter the pan is covered with water, which dries up in summer, leaving a deposit of salt. Home to the old thatched farmhouse as the short African twilight fades, and the hills grow dark, and the Southern Cross glimmers faintly over all.

#### LAMENT FOR MORAIG.

Cold blow the winds on the heights of Ben Loyal,  
Dense are the mists drifting up from the sea;  
But colder by far are the hands of my Moraig,  
And denser the veil 'twixt my true love and me.  
Winds in the corries, go wail for my Moraig!  
Wail for her! Wail for her!  
Sea-birds, whose music is ever a crying,  
Cry for her! Cry for her!

When on Ben Loyal the spring morn was dawning,  
And high on the hill-tops young deer were at play,  
We stood where the burn in the heather sings clearest  
And plighted our love-troth for aye and for aye.

Down by the burnside my Moraig knelt, laughing,  
Held up her hands with clear water to me:  
'Drink of it, lad! May the burn cease its running  
Or ever thy Moraig be faithless to thee!'

Streams of the mountains, that day were ye singing  
Songs of the gladness our lives held in store?  
Streams of the mountains, be silent and sing not.  
Moraig! my Moraig! will hear you no more.

High were our hopes in the gold of spring's dawning,  
Fearless our hearts as the clear sky o'erhead;  
Now at my feet are the brown birch-leaves lying,  
Now in the autumn my Moraig is dead.

Dark loom the clouds sinking down o'er Ben Loyal,  
Gray are the mists drifting up from the sea;  
But darker by far is the life that is left me,  
And all days for ever are gray days to me.  
Winds in the corries, go wail for my Moraig!  
Wail for her! Wail for her!  
Sea-birds, whose music is ever a crying,  
Cry for her! Cry for her!  
Cry evermore for her!

L. M. MACRAV.